



NOW THEN.

DOWNTIMER. HECQ. ALE. UNNATURAL SELECTION.
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EDITORIAL.

First off - thanks to everyone who made the Opus stage at Peace in the Park last month so damn great. The weather held out and the atmosphere was massive, as was the Renegade Brass Band / 7 Black Tentacles collaboration extravaganza. Most of all, thanks to each and every person involved in the organisation of the event (you know who you are). You can read a review on page 35. Roll on next year, I say.

The weird graf wordshapes in this issue are by a man called Downtimer, who we previewed back in issue 13. Read an interview with him on page 20.

I also had a chat with German experimental producer Hecq, whose music is as frightening as it is accomplished.

Don't forget to fill in our online readership survey for the chance to win cinema, theatre and gig tickets and make your opinions known. Visit nowthensurvey.co.uk for more details.

Send stuff to subs@nowthenmagazine.com.

SAM.

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LOCALCHECK:

NO2ID / FESTIVALS.

HOSTED BY ALT-SHEFF.

It's the summertime! Sunshine, peace and freedom. Even the sneaky database state ID card scheme has been scrapped by those freedom-loving Conservatives. Or has it? Why is the No2ID campaign still going on like some latter-day Votes For Women group? Well, for one thing your medical records are soon to be splashed all over a national database, unless you personally opt out. The new government slipped permission through on the day of the Cumbria shootings, a U-turn on a pre-election promise. If you're not worried then perhaps you should be. It's all about Summary Health Records now being rolled out – so summery and full of truth and light that I'm instinctively suspicious. It's creepy. There are characters called Caldicott Guardians supposed to protect your confidentiality. Don't take my word for it – look it up yourself.

This removes traditional confidentiality between patient and doctor forever, handing data controller status to civil servants. Then it's access all areas to thousands of staff, including sensitive information like sexuality, ethnicity, genetics, mental health issues, drug use, abortion, contraception, impotence, paternity, infertility, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, infidelity, personal relationships, emotional problems, test results, domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse. And, by the way, access and use for 'secondary purposes' is OK 'in the public interest'. Investigations? Research, maybe? Worried yet?

At first it will contain 'important information about your health.' Wait a minute...'At first'? 'Important information' about health? Like there's unimportant as well? So there's more to come? Oh yes indeed. Once your record's on the system, there's a process called 'passive enrichment' to add information without your consent...for life.

You can always opt in later, but you can't ever opt out. Records will never be deleted. Even if your details have been hacked, perhaps via the wonderful new secure website www.healthspace.nhs.uk.

What? You didn't know about all this? It's one of what Eamonn Ward of Sheffield Green Party calls 'increasing examples of expensive government projects driven by links with big corporations and political donations'.

No2ID and other NHS pressure groups had to fight for the possibility of opt-out. Even the doctors' association, the BMA, is queasy about it. If you don't fill in the opt-out form, you're in. It's called 'implied consent', and it would be totally illegal for consumer sales. Under 16s won't even be told directly. Research shows only one in seven even remember getting the letter. Worried yet?

If you've got a serious life-threatening condition it could save precious time in an emergency. Or could it? Computer systems aren't bullet-proof like, say, a MedicAlert bracelet. Count me out. I'd rather sit and wait and see what happens. I strongly advise you to get onto the No2ID website and check this out, urgently.

Anyway there's a time for suspicious vibes and a time for good ones. For me, the best way of data-sharing in the summer sun has got to be at festivals. June saw the brilliance that was Peace in the Park 2010, Sheffield's first ever Bike Festival and Pride, while the Green Fair celebrated its 25th birthday. July has started in fine flourishing form. By the time you read this you've either sadly missed or had a great time at; Heeley, Firth Park, Sharrow and Woodseats festivals, Cliffhanger and Wortley Hall's South Yorkshire Festival.

A Weekend Free School promises great days and lively nights from July 9th to 11th. Details will be announced on Sheffield Social Centre's website. The same weekend (Sat 10th) if you live nearer to Chesterfield, look out for music and green community stuff happening at Inkerman Park (details at the-buzz.org). The month rounds off with more mega musical fun at Tramlines - still free, still great, loads of bands, all weekend, 23rd to 25th.

Moving into August, look out for the Lammas Festival, the Pagan welcoming of the harvest (and a bit of pixie activity here, there and everywhere). Plenty more popping up no doubt. To keep up-to-date, don't forget to check out Alt-Sheff, Sheffield's sun-shiniest guide to the alternative side of what's going down.

no2id-sheffield.net

sheffieldsocialcentre.org.uk

the-buzz.org

tramlines.org.uk

alt-sheff.co.uk



SECRET SHEFFIELD.

BELL CASTING AT STERLING WORKS.

CLARE MACKENZIE.



At the site that was once considered the furnace of the British Empire, a bell was cast in the traditional way using tin, copper, gold and silver. The latter two metals were donated by the local community, who were asked to give personal pieces. Gold and silver from jewellery that came from heirlooms or failed relationships as a poignant way of saying goodbye, whilst keeping the memories immortalised to ring out new, happier choruses for generations of artists to come.

It was a beautiful day on June 11th and clear blue skies peaked into the courtyard of Sterling Works. I had just phoned David Heugh to apologise profusely that I misspelt his name in my last article. A classic mistake I am slightly embarrassed to admit and one I will not make again.

Being a true gentleman, David brushed my apology aside and said he was standing on a podium, microphone in hand about to announce the casting of the bell and asked if I was nearby. As it happened I was, so he instructed me to come to the works as his guest to witness this historical moment.

I'll admit the conversation was inhibited by a lot of background noise so I wasn't entirely clear on what exactly I was being invited to, but with a hop, skip and a jump increased by it being Friday and being freed from the confines of the office, I turned up to a truly surprising and momentous occasion.

I walked into a busy courtyard with the central area cordoned off by metal barriers, the reason for which was immediately apparent. In the centre was a furnace emitting those heatwobbles, like the ones you used to watch as kids on hot summers over cars. It was fashioned the old way, made of bricks and mortar and designed purely for function and not for aesthetics.

This fed into a square metal mold (that I have since discovered contained sand and horse manure) for the liquid metal to be poured into so that the bell could be cast. On the top of the furnace a metal chute could be followed up to a window, high up on the side of the building.

This is the third bell to be cast and they are intended to be rung at very particular times to mark the solstice and the equinox. Four times a year, they are rung across England in Gloucester, Stourbridge, Nailsworth and Sheffield, with a potential fifth planned for Darlington.

The bells chime in tune to create a chord of music connecting students, communities and histories, ringing in the new out of the old.

There was a queue of people who traversed up some steps. You could watch them moving through the top windows, forming a line to wait by the chute snaking down to the furnace. As they all cast their jewellery down the chute, the pieces made an odd scraping noise, almost in protest, as they met their end in the heat of the molten metal.

Traditionally it is said gold was donated by communities to sweeten the tone of the bell and the relationship of the metals was influential in the guilds, who played an important role in attempting to guarantee standards among crafts in Medieval England.

Copper originated through the power of Venus. Pewter tin, mainly used by students at the college today, related to the planet Jupiter and gold, of course, was related to the Sun. The casting of bells was and still is seen as a celestial and earthly event by those who understand the deep resonant history behind this tradition.

Freeman College intentionally chose to use the archaic method of casting bells rather than today's very tidy electrical method. It was also used so that the process was visible to the public, allowing them to truly understand the event they were participating in.

Putting in jewellery with a traumatic history is an intentional part of the process, a cleansing through the alchemy of fire to create a dissolution, where the object goes back to its primary state or 'materia prima'. Through fire and light, traumas and histories are completely dissolved, ready to be recast into something new.

The event was not without its own trauma and drama as the mould leaked, almost setting the Master of Fire, Bill Benton, on fire and causing some distress among the onlookers as the lava of metal crept towards a nearby gas canister. I felt this gave the event gravitas and demonstrates just how dangerous and brutal the process really was. I was fascinated to watch the metal seep out in liquid metal rivers and almost instantly harden into solid and unusual shapes in the sand as it was frantically thrown over the escaping rivulets. A little part of me fancied that it would be nice to own a piece of the art that tried to escape.



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UNNATURAL SELECTION.

THE \$10 MILLION DINOSAUR.

EEx.

If you spend much time online these days, it's difficult to avoid links to TED talks.

For the uninitiated, TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design and is a non-profit organisation that began life as a conference but has now burgeoned into something that resembles a cult of materially-obsessed zealots who deliver evangelistic talks about the benefits of technology. Their tag line is "Ideas worth spreading", but what they actually mean is "Marketing worth copying".

Although there are exceptions, the TED talks are primarily people selling products or services that add nothing to our lives except new sources of monetized aspiration, frustration and stress.

One such talk is by Dr Jane McGonigal, Director of Games Research & Development at the Institute for the Future, a not-for-profit organisation based in California, naturally.

She attempts to explain to us how "...games are so essential to the survival of the human species" and talks of empowerment, social responsibility and saving the world. However, it is merely a sales pitch, attempting to guilt us into believing that computer games designers like her can enable us to become "super-empowered", or that we can achieve something that is "essential to the survival of the human species". Quite a claim.

In many of the TED talks people discuss how technology will "save" us. But save us from what? Humans have proved themselves to be an amazingly successful species without PDAs, games consoles or Ethernet connections. I think that fresh food, clean water and shelter will save the human race more reliably and sustainably than any massively multiplayer online role-playing game.

"By spending all this time playing games," McGonigal insists, "we are actually changing what we are capable of as human beings. We are evolving into a more collaborative and hardy species". She adds: "This is true, I believe it." Those two concepts do not necessarily go together and she's closing a pretty big gap there. She wraps up with a wish that "we can...play games that matter, to survive on this planet for another century".

I have nothing against computer games, and play is a learning instinct pre-dating Atari by a hundred million years, but I have a rather more optimistic figure in mind for the future of the human race and my strategy does not rely on Wii Fit.

McGonigal's own website is littered with improbable claims of the benefit of games and features the hilarious phrase, "Reality is broken. Game designers can fix it." The arrogance is breathtaking. She is trying to promote an artificial need and then bill us for the promised solution.

Another exceptionally well-delivered but equally vacuous TED talk is by Caleb Chung, co-inventor of the Furby, about his robot dinosaur Pleo, made famous on UK TV in the Apprentice. He delivers a truly entertaining presentation about his career and the development of Pleo. Eventually he reveals: "...and then, four years and ten million dollars later, we have little Pleo." I'd like to think I could achieve a lot more with \$10,000,000 than a toy that will entertain and educate less than the cardboard box it was packaged in. Chung continues: "We are designing our children's best friends and there's a lot of social responsibility in that. That's why Pleo is soft and gentle and loving." Just like a real sauropod.

He says: "Our belief is that humans need to feel empathy towards things in order to be more human and we think we can help that out by having little creatures that you can love."

Is it only me that finds the concept of being taught to be "more human" a little misguided? Despite Chung's insistence on the authenticity of the behaviour of Pleo, it exhibits more than a passing resemblance to the bland, mediated anthropomorphism of Disney cartoons.

TED is actually a platform for a white, middle-class, North American consumerist propaganda that insists that more technology = more good = more salvation, but actually means "Buy more product". This continually reinforced tyranny is no more authentic than the DoubleThink of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, although the voice of IngSoc is no longer a strident dictator but a persuasive cynic.

I would love to give a TED talk but I think my perspective would be unpalatable to the vast audience of self-congratulating airheads who have no more insight than they have taste. If the future looks anything like Jane McGonigal or Caleb Chung imagine it, then I hope I do not live to see it. If you want a picture of the future that I hope for, it would be a boot stamping on the face of Mickey Mouse, forever.

Truth is broken. Polemic can fix it.





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DOWN WITH HIGH VOLUME VERTICAL DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS.

JAMES LOCK.



Beer is very important to the British people. In particular, a dark beer made from malted grain, hops, water and yeast. The Saxons named it Ealu and drank it in the first ever ‘pubs’, the Roman style 1st Century taverna which later became taverns, which became ye olde pubs which (through an unforeseen spasm in common sense) became the modern day ch*in pub; full of loud muppets standing drinking identikit lager. Yes, ‘ch*in’ in this context is a curse word.

Despite the obvious and tired association of alcohol with high street violence, heartbreak and pissing on public monuments, it is important not to forget the cultural significance of local pubs and locally brewed ale. Ale is unique to every region in which it is produced, reliant as it is on the variety of hop, the flavour of the malt and even the quality of the local water supply. The recipes for beer are also developed over years of brewing experience and each master brewer does it differently. This is the beauty of a choice in drinking that we are beginning to forget as we batter ourselves around a Wetherspoons or Varsity bar, choosing from the same four types of lager. Go and visit the independent Sheffield pubs and try a beer from Abbeydale, Kelham Island or Sheffield Brew Co or any of the other great breweries in Sheffield. Taste the difference in something made locally and with care.

The cultural significance of your local pub does not simply lie in the quality of the beer, but in the role that pubs play as centres of community. In a recently published report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), pubs were identified as providing “meeting places where social networks are strengthened and extended”. Interestingly for this writer, the report also commented on the fact that “pubs are felt to offer things such as tradition and authenticity that are becoming rarer in a world transformed by global commercial pressures”.

Global commercial pressures in the local pub?

For those of you who are as yet unaware - a little beer history. At the end of World War II and with the emergence of a global market place, the biggest brewers in the UK started to get ambitious, buying up pubs and selling their own beers through them. By the Eighties the six biggest brewers in the country produced 75% of all the beer sold and also owned half of the pubs nationwide. Over this same period cask ale gradually began to be replaced with heavily promoted lager stored in ‘nitro kegs’, which were cheaper to manufacture and travelled better.

Along came Thatcher, who perceived the national brewers as members of an old elite. Acting on a recommendation from the monopolies and mergers commission, she introduced sweeping legislation to end the monopoly on beer of the ‘Big Six’. Enter the 1989 Beer Orders, which declared that no brewer could own more than 2,000 pubs and that each landlord must be given the option to offer one guest ale produced by a rival brewer. The idea behind this was that brewers would be prevented from monopolising pubs and the types of beers in them, offering a greater freedom of choice to consumers. This didn’t quite work out as planned. Instead of selling off their pubs, the Big Six started up stand-alone companies called Pub Co’s, to whom they ‘sold’ all their pubs in a kind of golden handshake. Pub Co’s were not brewers themselves and so were exempt from the 1989 Beer Orders and could own as many public houses as they could lay their grubby mitts on. In 1989 the three biggest brewers owned 20,000 pubs, a third of all pubs in the UK. Today the three biggest Pub Co’s own...you guessed it - 20,000 pubs. Meanwhile, the brewers themselves have become even more powerful, producing 84% of all beer consumed in the UK. Paul Kingsnorth in his seminal text Real England points out that one of the major problems with this is that in 1989 the brewers involved were national companies with a closer connection to their tenants and customers. Today, as Pub Co’s they are multinational conglomerates with no attachment to anyone other than their distant shareholders.

Roger Protz, one of Britain’s most famous beer writers, commented that this development ruined the relationship between pub owner and tenant, paving the way for a change in attitudes towards customers, who began to be referred to as ‘traffic’, and towards pubs themselves, who began borrowing marketing techniques from sandwich chains and fast food restaurants. Hence your ‘high volume vertical drinking’ establishments in every city centre. Don’t sit down, you’ll drink less, pay less, be worth...less.,

To help complete an understanding of this mad cycle and the ‘commercial pressures’ on your local pub, a grasp of the devil’s handshake known as the ‘beer tie’ is crucial. The beer tie describes the relationship between landlord and Pub Co. Now, the landlord must pay an often inflated rent to the Pub Co for lease of the building in question. He or she must also agree to buy all beer from the Pub Co at an inflated price. To give you some form of practical comparison, in 2008 a landlord could buy a crate of beer for £16 from the supermarket. Instead of doing this, however, he or she is forced by contract to purchase that same beer from the Pub Co’s for £28. Is it any wonder that the most recent Beer & Pub Association report shows 39 pubs are closing every week?

While the doom and gloom facts of this situation are important, it is also important that we appreciate what we do have. Sheffield, as per usual, does alright for local ale. We have several independent breweries that brew local character ale well. They often also own a drinking establishment, where you will find their beers settled happily among those of their rivals.

If you are reading this and want to go that one step further, it is worth being aware of community pubs. The first British community pub was set up by the residents of Hesketh Newmarket in the Lake District in 2001. The basis of the idea is simple - find a pub that is up for sale, form a share-based cooperative in which each person is allowed to buy one share and can only sell shares back to the cooperative. Purchase said pub, employ a landlord and staff and run the premises free of Pub Co’s and corporate beer ties. You can even take it further as they have done in Hesketh and run your own micro brewery alongside, so you can ingest even more local character into your regulars.

The long and the short of all this is that local independent pubs and breweries provide cultural sustenance and an impetus to get out of your house, away from your telly and into the thick of your community. They also put much needed resources back into the local economy rather than into the pockets of distant shareholders, something which is of crucial importance during the recession. Most local landlords - whether tied to a Pub Co or not - want to provide their customers with choices that incorporate the produce of their local surroundings. Help them do that by joining campaigns on their behalf and by making a deliberate effort to sit in the sun and drink locally brewed ale.

Cheers.

Information Points:

communitypubs.org
camra.org.uk
fairpint.org.uk
realengland.blogspot.com

Sheffield Breweries:

Abbeydale Brewery - abbeydalebrewery.co.uk
Kelham Island Brewery - kelhambrewery.co.uk
Sheffield Brewery Co - sheffieldbrewery.com
The Brew Company - thebrewcompany.co.uk
Bradfield Brewery - bradfieldbrewery.co.uk

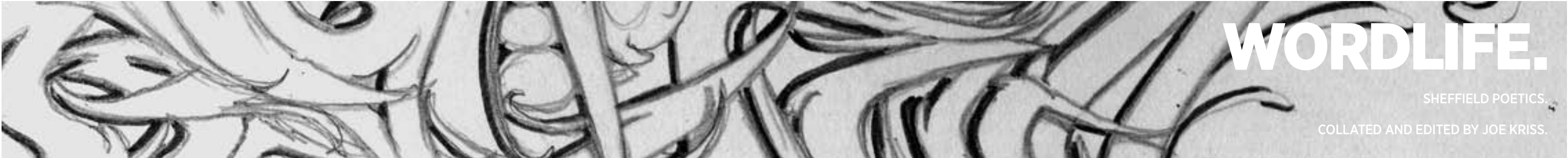
Peaks-based Breweries:

Thornbridge Brewery - thornbridgebrewery.co.uk

Recommended Sheffield Real Ale Pubs:

The Fat Cat
The Gardeners Rest
The Sheaf View
The Kelham Island Tavern
The Sheffield Tap
The Rising Sun
The Hillsborough Hotel
The Crown





WORDLIFE.

SHEFFIELD POETICS.

COLLATED AND EDITED BY JOE KRISS.

Second half of Max Dunbar’s prose submission this month, alongside two poems. Hope you enjoy. As ever, send all submissions of prose and poetry to subs@nowthensheffield.com.

PS - Programming for Off The Shelf Literature Festival is coming along nicely. We can’t wait! Check out their website for more details - offtheshelf.org.uk.

YOU, MY FRIEND...

You, my friend, are the puff of smoke by the pub railings; propped by a pint, and armed with a razor-sharp deconstruction of pop culture.
You are popping down to the shop, one foot minus sock and returning with a sun, crisps,
and a packet of death in your hands.
My friend, you are a father now, enlivened by and occupied with responsibility. There’s no time for the park bench anymore.

And we are at your daughter’s christening, the congregation’s emotion warming the cold day, which outside skewers at our exposed, grinning faces. *We* are two of the only ones who know, trading a currency of loyalty just like two beggars, modest and happy. We are each other’s best men.

You, my friend, are looking down on your child with a grin wider than the Humber Bridge, simultaneously making banter with me, the wife, and your bairn, like a true showman.

Forever young, with a wrinkled brow of weathered practicality, and fortified by dreams of a happy retirement in these streets we were both proud to call home,

You, my friend, are standing in the middle of a circle, Meeting my eye.

AARON SMITH.

HADES.

The phone rang in the middle of the night.
The answerphone kicked in
after six rings. Enough to wake me,
to set my heart pounding.

I went downstairs, bare foot,
listened to the message:
it was the voices of the dead,
all the dead I’ve ever known,
partying, blowing whistles as if they were at a rave,

screaming laughter, drunken shouting,
slurred speech, a punch hitting the wrong jaw
(you could tell by the way the others joined in, jeering).
Then someone dropped the receiver
and I heard boots crunching glass underfoot,
a tough kick against a head,
the dull thud of an own goal.

JULIE MELLOR.

DEMONOLOGY – PART 2.

Continued from Now Then June edition.

The far wall was a frothing vertical ocean. She didn’t look at it directly – Kevin had done so once and had never been the same again – but there was no avoiding that dully living light splashing onto the walls, or the splattered ichor on her Homepage carpet, or the things you glimpsed on the rim of your eye that could send you mad for a thousand years.

Reilly sucked air through his teeth. ‘You been taken to the fucking cleaners, love.’

‘I phoned the council helpline,’ Eve said, ‘and they just –’

An eloquent snort summed up the priest’s opinion on Stockport Council and all its works. ‘Cowboys,’ he said. ‘You been here long?’

‘Just over two years.’ Another sensitive area. She had been raised in central Manchester and had only just got out to the suburbs, and while people were friendly enough, she couldn’t help thinking that –

‘How much d’you pay for this place?’

Eve’s mouth actually fell open at the outrageousness of the question, but Reilly did not notice.

He lit a cigarette. ‘This whole area is rotten w’cracks. You got a portal here. Tricky fuckers. Council’ll send a vicar out, read some Bible verses and wave a cross around, laughin cause he knows he’ll pick up another callout fee in six months when it flares up again. Need a lot a work, though. My brother specialises in portals.’

At that moment there issued a hellish screech from what used to be the far wall of Kevin Clarendon’s guestroom. It went on for what Eve could swear was a full moment. There was incredible pain and evil triumph in that scream. At last it stopped.

Reilly treated it as a passing irritation, like a car alarm on a Saturday morning. He rooted in his bag and took out an ancient volume that looked far too bulky to even fit in the priest’s case. He flipped it open. The pages were yellowing and spattered with some black-red substance.

Eve tried to read over the priest’s shoulder, but the ink actually seemed to *crawl* away from her eyes. It was a horrible feeling, the ocular equivalent of biting on tinfoil.

The priest began to recite, following the words with his finger. The wind kicked up a gear; she felt it whip about her legs, and actually took Reilly’s arm for support.

He turned around. ‘Best you go downstairs a while, Missus Clarendon. Get the kettle on.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yeah, this won’t take a moment.’ He turned back to the pages, and his voice changed again. ‘*N’gar te vemed, shub th’goralsh scaman...*’

Something emerged from the froth, something that was all eyes and teeth and grasping, inhuman hands. She bolted.

She made another peppermint tea. She tried to read the material for tonight’s governors’ meeting, but the noises from above rendered concentration impossible.

The mutter and rustle of Reilly’s chants were soon accompanied by the rush of the wind. This intensified until the wind became a scream: like the inscribable and unignorable noises that woke her and Kevin in the night, only worse; this sound froze her circulation and made her fillings tingle.

And at the core of the scream was some voice, babbling and crying and laughing. Not Reilly’s voice. This voice came from

(beyond)

and, though the surface language was nonsense, the nonsense words tolled out some evil significance in her heart.

Then, the house jolted to the left. This was real enough; a plant pot fell from the mantelpiece and smashed in the hearth. It reminded her of that point four earthquake they’d experienced on holiday in Turkey: that feeling of the hotel jolting to the left. Only this was like the whole *universe* had jolted to the left.

Silence. And then the tramp of workboots on the staircase. The clack of the kettle. Tentatively she walked through to the kitchen; she had a headrush, as if she’d stood up too fast.

Reilly looked completely unharmed. ‘Yeah, tricky fucker, like I said, Missus Clarendon, but I got it shut in the end.’

She couldn’t believe it. ‘It’s... it’s gone?’

‘See for y’self, darlin.’

He led her upstairs. The far wall was back. Even the framed print of the canal locks had returned. The weird stains on the carpet had vanished. The atmosphere had lost its weight; it was as if the place had been aired out.

‘My God! You’re a genius!’ The unlovely inconvenience of half an hour ago was now the hero of Wilmslow View.

He laughed off the praise. ‘It’s what I do, Missus Clarendon. The Lord’s work!’ He drank off his mug of tea as if it were beer. ‘Love to stay and chat, but I got a job on at Bredbury Hall. Looks like one of the previous owners is kicking up trouble, walking about with his head under his arm, frightenin the women, that sort a thing.’

Reilly scribbled on some tillpaper and tore off a slice. ‘If you could pay that by the end a the month that’d be much appreciated. Call us if you got any more problems.’

She had to fight the urge to kiss him as she saw him out. The demonologist’s van tore out of Wilmslow View, leaving exhaust smoke over the Lexi and Saabs; at that moment Kev’s Mondeo pulled into the vacated space.

‘Was that him?’ Kevin asked.

‘Yes. And it’s sorted! Kevin, you won’t *believe*!’

‘Thank Christ.’ Kevin hung his jacket on the nule. ‘Got the bill there?’

He took it from her and nodded. ‘Reasonable. Got to be careful with these people, but this seems –’

Her husband ran a hand through his hair; he kept it cropped now, close to the skull. She regarded the back of his head as he walked upstairs to the shower. She had meant to get some of that Just for Men stuff from the chemist.

At just twenty-nine, Kevin Clarendon’s hair was bright white.

MAX DUNBAR.



HONEST ROBERT.

IT'S PROBABLY NOT HIS NAME ANYHOW.

TOMMY BLANK.

Having decided to sell my Nikon digital camera (reluctantly – independent journalism surprisingly doesn't exactly pay the rent) on the popular private classifieds website Gumtree, I was surprised to receive a message from someone offering me £170 above the selling price.

If I agreed to ship it to the other side of the planet.

In my experience with Gumtree and indeed the Sheffield Forum classifieds site, potential buyers are more likely to offer a knackered LG Viewty without a charger in part exchange for your Fountain of Youth than they are to willingly part with more cash than is being asked of them. I'm not an idiot, and at no point was I about to send my precious Nikon to the southern hemisphere. However, it was late at night, I had finally grown tired of the Russell Crowe film I had persevered with for over an hour and I thought it might be fun to humour him.

The events that followed are documented below in an iChat conversation between the buyer, a certain Mr Robert LeBron, and myself. I believe that having attempted to fleece me for several hundred pounds, in doing so Robert waived his right to have his identity protected, so I haven't bothered changing it for publication. It's probably not even his name anyhow.

I call this piece 'Honest Robert'.

Robert: Hello seller, nice inuring about your item is still available for sale

Tommy: That makes absolutely zero sense but sure yes it's still for sale

Robert: ok thanks I will like to offer £370, including the shipping cost and I will like you to get back to me with your PayPal email account for payment now

Tommy: OK Robert – you'll have to provide your address for me to send it over

Robert: I will send the payment now

Tommy: Sure

Robert: can you remove the add from gumtree now

Tommy: Will do

Robert: I have send the payment. My address for shipping is on an email

Tommy: One sec, I'll just log in to PayPal

Robert: OK

Tommy: That's interesting. That very (ahem) convincing confirmation of received funds email that PayPal just sent me doesn't appear to be accurate. I logged in to my PayPal and it says 'PayPal balance: £0.00 GBP'

Robert: yes PayPal hold it until you get the item ship out

Robert: don't you read the payment email very well

Tommy: Oh they do? That must be a new service...

Robert: i think so

Tommy: No need to be rude Robert - as the email looks like it was written by a complete spanner you can understand my confusion there. So I should ship the item then yes?

Tommy: Robert?

Tommy: Robert LeBron? The Bronster? You there buddy?

Robert: yes I am here, what did you say

Tommy: It seems PayPal have started sending their correspondence from confirmationlinkcenter@consultant.com instead of service@paypal.com

Robert: what do you mean by that

Tommy: Makes sense - I suppose it rolls off the tongue easier...

Tommy: Well since I began using PayPal over six years ago, they have always emailed me from service@paypal.com. But the confirmation from your payment is from confirmationlinkcenter@consultant.com

Robert: they have change it from PayPal

Robert: yes

Tommy: Ok, well that's trustworthy enough...

Tommy: Of course, it would make perfect sense for a company called PayPal to cease using @paypal for their emails. On the very day you send me £370. Quite a coincidence wouldn't' you agree?

Robert: so what gonna happen

Tommy: Fantastic avoidance of the question there, Robbo. What happens now is, I package up the camera and send to you to that address.

Robert: ok, and get back to me when you are done with that

Tommy: OK

Tommy: It's very nice of you to pay over a hundred pounds more than the asking price by the way

Tommy: Are all scammers this generous? Sorry, I meant all buyers

Tommy: OK I'll have the shipment tracking number for you in a moment

Robert: ok

Tommy: Robert

Robert: yes

Tommy: I think its time you were honest with me

Tommy: are you

Tommy: are or are you not

Robert: yes I am

Tommy: I wasn't finished with the question yet

Tommy: are you

Tommy: or are you not

Tommy: Attempting to completely rip me off with the most blatantly obvious scam on God's green earth

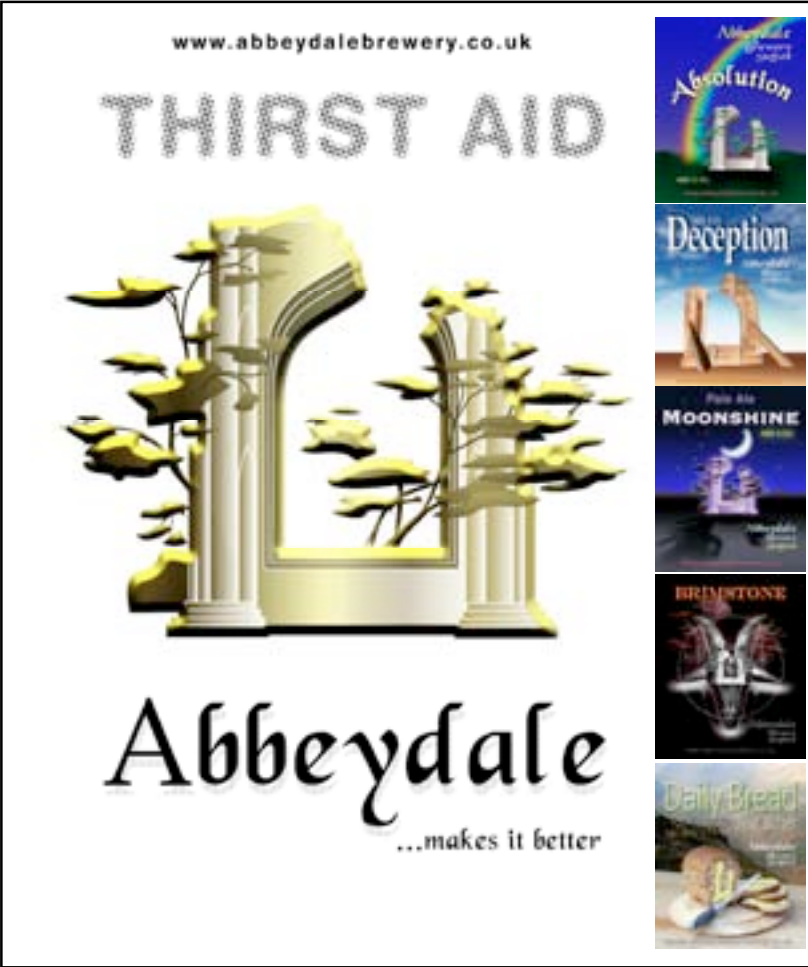
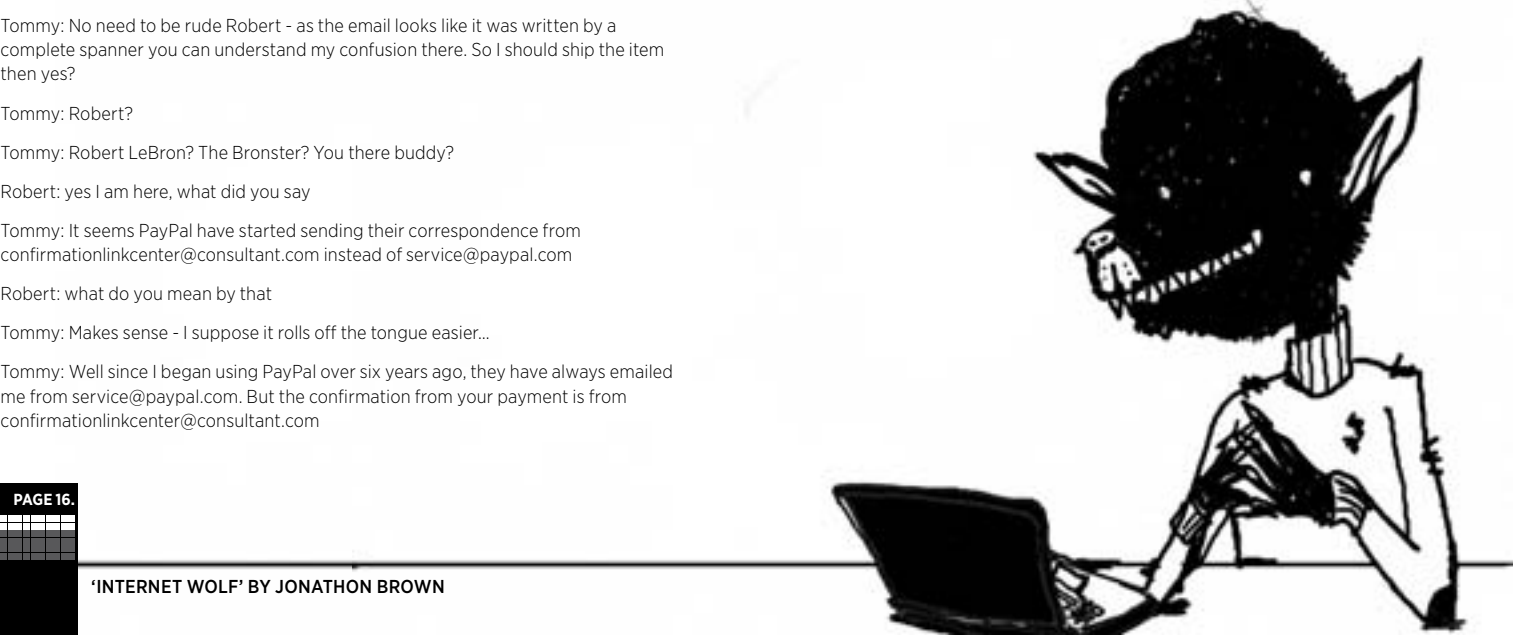
Robert: I am

Tommy: I appreciate the honesty Robert

Robert: you are welcome

Tommy: Oh, and you might want to spell transaction correctly in the next 'cofirmation email' you send...

Robert: thank you.





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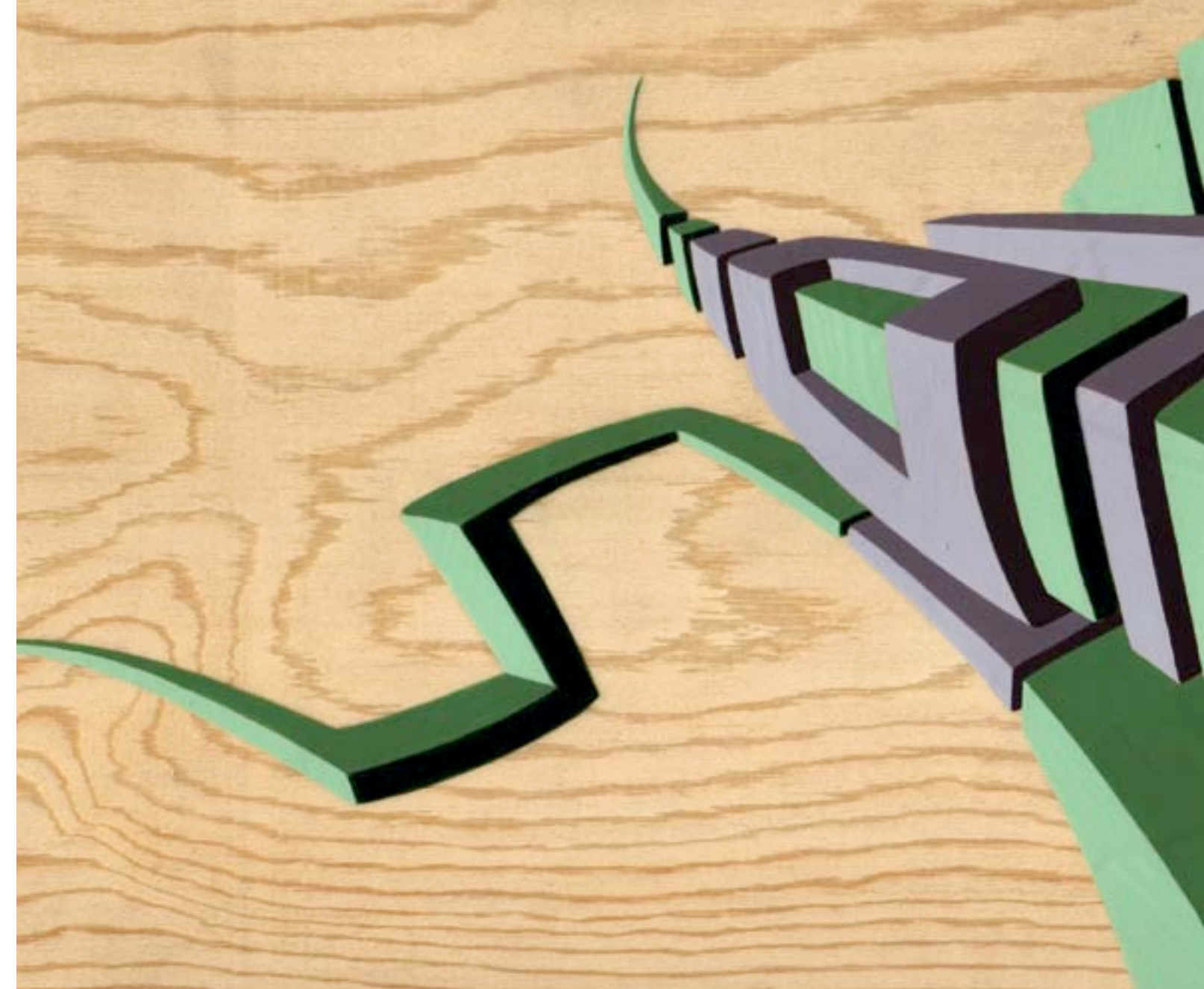
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DOWNTIMER.

WILDSTYLINGS.

INTERVIEW BY MATT JONES.

Gridwork and geometry underpin all art of any significance and effort. Downtimer is no different. With one foot in the murky world of relating letters and lines of graf, and the other in a meticulous conceptual design philosophy, his work has always had me coming back to check out what more he's done.

His dedication to real paint and brushes makes his work something else - this isn't cgi trickery, or soulless design. The intricately obscured lettershapes have become strange landscapes to explore visually, abstracted to such an extent that content doesn't matter, only flow, style and technique.

This only represents a small amount of this bloke's frankly intimidating output - and I don't get the feeling he will be slowing down anytime soon.

WHAT STARTED YOU DRAWING?

That is a very good question. I have no idea why I started drawing. I just did. I guess it called me. Or maybe it was just boredom from being an only child for 13 years. Either way, it's the only thing I remember doing since I was old enough to hold a drawing utensil. I used to draw with my Dad a lot, and it just stuck. As I grew older, it was always my favorite hobby. Just about every free minute of my time went into doodling. I loved the act of creating something from nothing.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF STARTING A NEW PIECE?

The process of a new piece really depends on what I'm trying to accomplish, or my particular mood at the time. I like to dabble in several different styles and mediums, so I actually have a few different processes. Sometimes they're completely freestyle, sometimes every little detail is mapped out, and sometimes I have a general idea to start with and I just build on it. Most of the time a piece starts with a simple word or phrase. I'll take the word or phrase and try to accent it with colors, motion, perspective, etc.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

My main source of inspiration stems from nature and natural formations. I enjoy seeing patterns all around me that were created naturally. Patterns that are completely random yet perfectly planned. I call them "planned imperfections". For example, the thousands of leaves on a tree, the bark on a tree trunk, cracks in a sidewalk, flickering flames, splashing water - all extremely complex but totally random. I also like following the natural flow of objects, like a crashing wave, leaves blowing in the wind or the way oil swirls around a pool of water. Another source of inspiration is technology and how it interacts with nature, the constant battle between the natural and man-made world and how the forces interact, attack and complement each other.

TOOLS. WHAT DO YOU USE REGULARLY AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE?

My main tools are basically acrylic and paint markers, but I often use other supplies if I'm trying to achieve a specific effect. Sometimes I'll use spraypaint, ink or watercolors for some backgrounds, but the majority of my pieces are all acrylic. Often I'll lay down an acrylic background and go over it with some paint markers. My favorite would have to be the paint markers because those pieces are strictly freestyle. I have a lot of fun just running with the piece and seeing where it takes me. I don't really have any idea how it's gonna turn out until it's done. I love the free feeling of freestyling, but I do get a greater feeling of accomplishment when I finish a perfectly executed piece that takes a lot of planning. So, once again, it just depends on what I'm trying to accomplish.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS?

These days I've been working a lot. I used to be unemployed and I just painted every day to support myself, but you can't really predict how much money you'll make per month from art sales, so I've taken up a consistent day job for regular income. Now I just paint in my spare time, along with playing video games...

OUT OF YOUR RECENT WORK, WHICH PIECE HAVE YOU ENJOYED MAKING THE MOST?

The piece I've enjoyed the most has to be 'Darkness'. It's the largest 3D piece I've ever painted and it was really a challenge. It took about three weeks to complete, working on and off. There were a lot of little details involved and I really took my time making everything perfect. Honestly, it kinda felt like I was never going to finish it, but in the end I was more than happy with the result. The rewarding feeling and pride were definitely worth all the hard work.

HOW HAS YOUR ART EVOLVED OVER TIME?

Over time my art has gotten a lot tighter, which is good and bad. I feel that it used to be more raw and random. It kept the brain thinking. But over time it has gotten more consistent. Now it's more based on a pattern and formula, compared to a raw explosion of suggested movement. I guess I've perfected my specific style, but I miss the rough quality it used to have. It could also be the fact that I'm never satisfied with my work.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

I'm working on a piece for a themed show in Los Angeles based on a comic strip. Basically, I'm incorporating my futuristic 3D work with my favorite comic character's alter ego, Spaceman Spiff.

ANY TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE MAKING MONEY FROM YOUR ART? DO YOU FIND IT IMPORTANT?

I don't feel it's 'important' to survive off your art. I did it specifically because I was disabled with a broken foot for six months and had no other way to make money for rent and bills. I was already doing a small amount of shows and freelance work, but once I got hurt I needed a way to survive so I dove into the art scene to see where it would take me. To my surprise I was very welcomed, kept getting offers for shows, was selling a lot of work and got a lot of good opportunities to advertise my work in print (magazines, album covers, clothing). So it kind of just snowballed and kept moving.

One piece of advice I can give is to take on every opportunity you get at first, even if you have to do it for free. Every job or show you do, your work gets seen by masses of people, and most likely there are other people in those masses that will want you to do work for them. So even if you do a handful of jobs for free, you'll eventually land something worth your while. It does take a lot of very hard work, but it will pay off if you're persistent.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE IN ART?

One of my biggest peeves with art is when people try to put way too much underlying meaning in a piece. I feel that a piece of art has to be aesthetically pleasing. There are way too many artists out there that produce garbage, yet make thousands of dollars because they can make up a huge story to go with a stick figure drawing on scrap paper.

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE IN ART?

I really enjoy seeing very simple pieces of art that portray a lot of character and personality. It's difficult to capture a lot of feeling in a simple piece, so that's something I truly respect. Ultimately I appreciate any art form that I can't do myself. Even if it's something that isn't my style, I do appreciate the skill involved in pulling it off.

GOOD ADVICE YOU WISH YOU'D BEEN TOLD EARLIER?

Honestly, there isn't anything I wish I'd been told. I never went to art school, so every experience was a learning experience and I enjoyed growing as I went along. I'm appreciative of every opportunity I've been given, and if I had the chance to do it all over again I'd do everything exactly the same.

downtimer.deviantart.com

MATT JONES
speaking to
DOWNTIMER.



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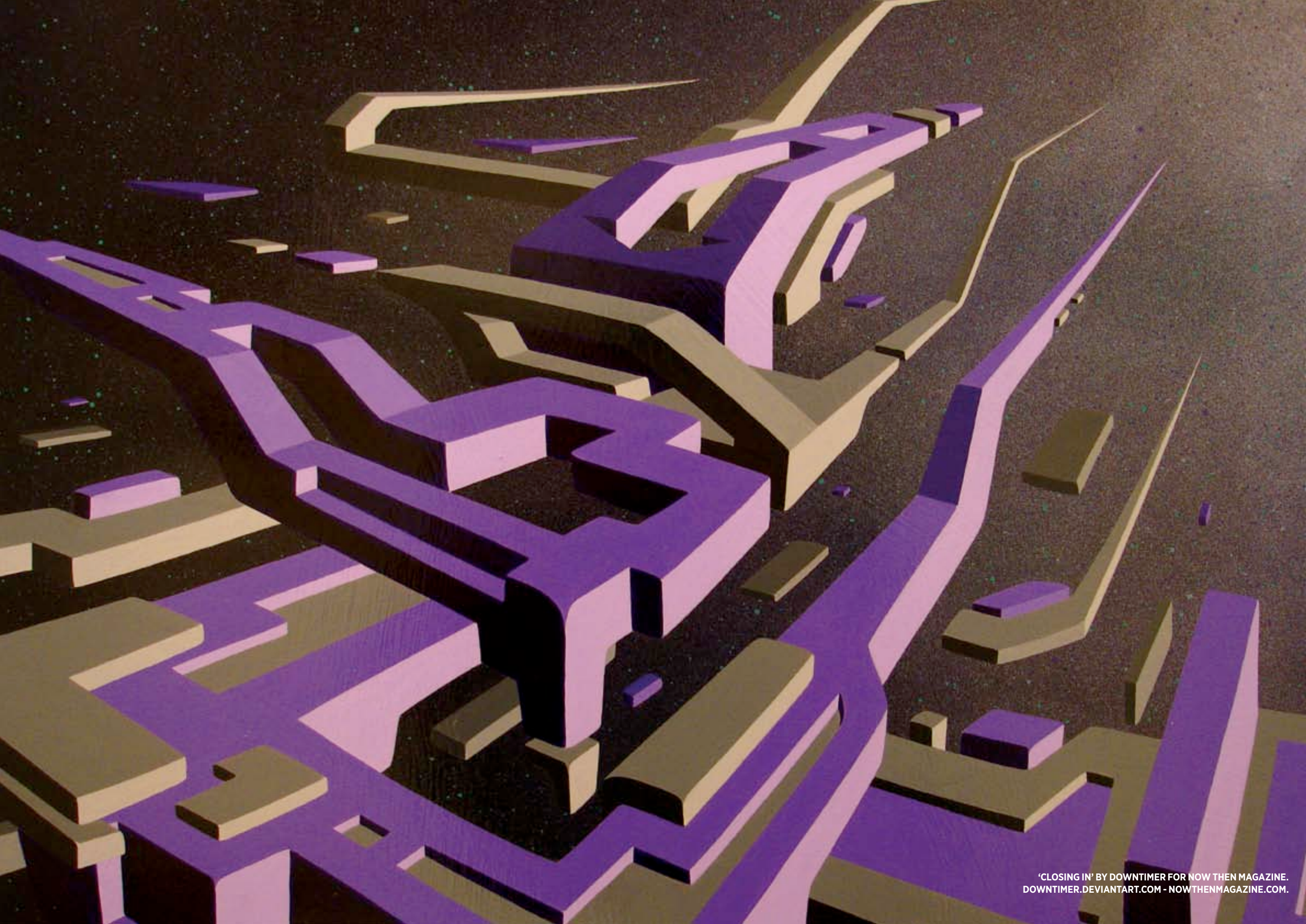
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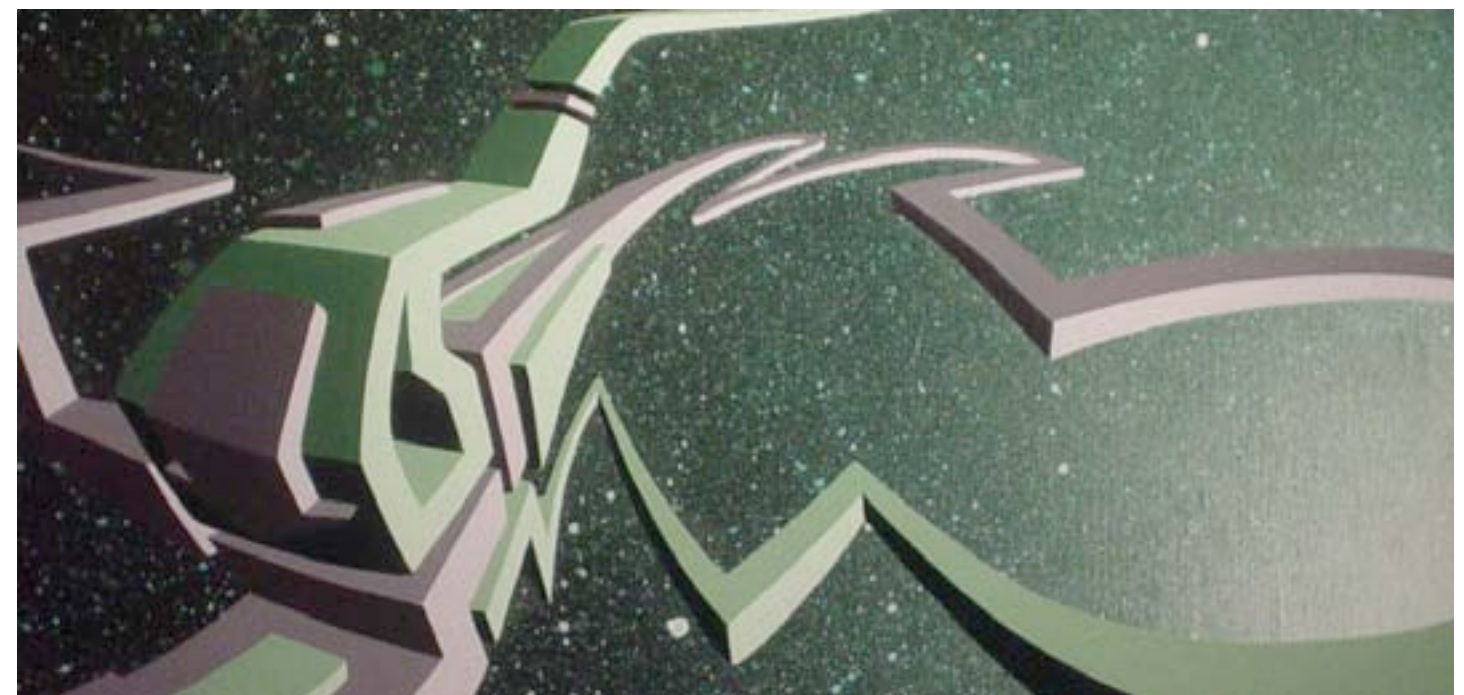
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A VS B.

A MUSIC REVIEWER’S WORST NIGHTMARE.

LAMBERTUS PRENT.

What is a music reviewer’s worst nightmare? Having to convince a burly bouncer that “actually mate, I think you’ll find I am on the guestlist” for the third time in a week? Failing to pick up on ‘the next big thing’? Having to write a positive review of a mate’s band who are utterly terrible? Being misquoted?

No. A music reviewer’s worst nightmare is much simpler and sadly much more commonplace – meeting a musician he has reviewed.

For the sake of argument, let’s call the reviewer “A” and the musician “B”. While B probably doesn’t realise it, he is in an absolute position of power in this situation. The problems facing A are numerous:

1. A doesn’t know if B has read the review.
2. A doesn’t know if his half-baked pseudonym alter ego is convincing enough to hold up to scrutiny.
3. A doesn’t know if B has a history of violent behaviour.
4. A is more often than not a frustrated, less successful musician himself.

If the review is negative, A doesn’t know if B has read the bit where he calls his creative output “lacklustre and frankly uninspiring, like a soggy tissue”. Or the bit where he describes his guitar as “pretentiously decorated, like a first-year student’s attempt at individuality”. Or the worst bit – “this band sounds exactly like [insert name here], but a worse version of them”. Why oh why did A have to write that?

Equally, if the review is positive, A doesn’t know if B has read the bit about how he is “the antidote to musical mediocrity”, how “his Midas touch animates the inanimate”, how he is “so talented his faeces are probably fully-formed operas”.

While A desperately tries to work out how to unwrite something, and B looks for the closest sharp implement, allow me to step in and restate a basic point - an opinion is an opinion. Granted, some are more informed and carry more weight than others, but they’re still at the least biased and at the most completely unfounded. It’s easy to afford written opinions more authority than they really deserve, and it’s even easier as a writer to go on a hyperbolic rampage. I suppose what I’m saying is that everyone involved needs to lighten up a bit. After all, no press is bad press.



2 POOR 2 PITCH.

4TH JUNE.
THE HARLEY.

REVIEWER - JAMES LOCK.

The Harley Hotel is a mainstay in the seven hills music scene. How many countless live shows and events have the Harley put on? ‘Week in week out’ doesn’t even cover it. So it was with pleasure that I wondered down to the Harley’s annual festival 2 Poor 2 Pitch. The fact that Clinic were headlining was also a pretty major factor. Having listened rather intently at one point to their standout album **Internal Wrangler** and in particular the song ‘The Second Line’, I was slightly astounded to see them headlining the bill. Great booking.

Beginning at around 6.30pm (a little early perhaps) were Kill the Captains - a band with few pretentions, yet their music will have your hand on your chin and your head nodding vigorously. Kill the Captains are a force to be reckoned with. Think Sonic Youth meets At the Drive-In meets Pelican meets the Specials and you’ll be as confused and pleased as I was. This lot have been turning heads more and more in the last year and it’s safe to say my head was turned.

Following on from the Captains were the widely respected Legend of the 7 Black Tentacles, who on any given day capture an audience convincingly with their innovative blend of post rock and instrumental hip hop. However, on this fine sunny evening they were not at their best. Three false starts on their cover of Einsturzende Neubauten’s ‘The Garden’ seemed to leave them all a little unsettled tonight. ‘Shit happens’ felt like the general consensus. Well worth a look and an entry fee next time you get the chance.

Next up, the Grammatics. It’s hard to be positive about such an offensively bland stab at making music. So I won’t try.

Playing the final live set of the evening, Clinic walk on stage dressed in white face masks and Mexican-styled ponchos. Unique. While maintaining their fluid guitar lines throughout, they appeared (nearly ten years on) to have slowed down the tempo somewhat, concentrating less on the constant pulse that used to define them and more on a beautifully restrained folk rock sentiment with an almost Beta Band lo-fi aspect. By the end of their set I was converted. Beautiful stuff and an enjoyable evening all round.

THE HEEBIE JEBBIES.

11TH JUNE.
THE HARLEY.

REVIEWER - EMILIE WOOTTEN.

Considering the wind, the football and the fact the band didn’t start till about half 11, the Heebie Jeebies had a huge turnout for this gig. The glitter and the colours that decorated the stage ignited excitement in the crowd and the equally exhilarated three band members maintained this feeling of fun and a party atmosphere throughout the gig.

The band opened with new single ‘Murderous’, an upbeat track blending the punk and pop aspects of their stage presence. The band were an impressive act to watch, keeping the energy and enjoyment high enough to engage the crowd throughout their twelve-song set. The evening ultimately became more about the band and the atmosphere they expel as opposed to the songs. They even say themselves: “We don’t waste our time trying to write good songs. It’s easier to just go with the flow and see what happens.” What happened was a ‘flow’ unlike that provided by the Sheffield landfill ‘indie’ scene, a combination of pop, calypso, disco and punk that kept absolutely everybody dancing.

The first part of the set consisted of songs that had a distinctive style from the outset, and this became all the more apparent with the introduction of ‘Romeo’, an epic, soulful number that was genuinely striking. This part of the set and the following four songs showed a technical prowess and musical ability that overcame the organised chaos of the first half. Their skill was demonstrated by drummer Thom’s amazing energy and ability to play frantic beats whilst keeping the song in time. Bassist Del was leaping into the crowd, dancing with the audience and never really missing a note. Singer and guitarist Owen expelled happiness and showed an immense passion.

With songs as impressive as this and others like ‘Butchers’ and ‘Misery Guts’, the second song on the single, this band are obviously capable of being more than just a fun live act. With various gigs coming up at Glastonbury and Tramlines, they are heading for bigger stages and I imagine an even bigger stage presence. If they continue to be as engaging and interesting to watch, big things will happen for the Heebie Jeebies.

PEACE IN THE PARK.

12TH JUNE.
PONDEROSA PARK.

REVIEWER – CHARLOTTE MORGAN.

Another year older and Peace in the Park has really filled out into its hillside home at the Ponderosa. And so follows another slightly foggy recollection of another sunny Sheffield day. Until recently, when talking about great gigs/festivals/parties, I was still harking back to last year’s Peace in the Park and the after party. But the time came again for thousands of carrier bag laden locals to decamp to a grassy common and even after my shamefully late post-work arrival, this year’s event added plenty to the anecdote repertoire for the year to come.

With tea, bongos, beer, burritos, BMXs and a carefully programmed line-up combining too many genres and activities for the word count (reggae, samba, acoustic, dub, funk, healing, cabaret, vegetables...), along with a spot of wizardry with the weather, Peace in the Park attracts a growing crowd. United by an interest in the music, support for the cause, intrigue, a penchant for a chilled day in the sun or a general desire to go a bit lentil and dance around a field, the crowd remains open and friendly in a characteristically Sheffield way; if they’re not friends of friends, they’re strangers who turn out to be friends of friends of friends; the guy from that cafe, the girl from that party... The generous crowd bring crucial spontaneity – anyone for an al fresco game of xiangqi? The music goes hand in hand with the event’s celebratory, charitable and community oriented atmosphere, and whilst it includes just a selection from Sheffield’s rich output and there’s a faint sense of scene, any exclusivity is blown away by a prevailing warm atmosphere and all-round good vibe.

Passing an encouragingly lively throng in the DJ tent, I spied friends settled in convenient view of the Opus stage, which once again added an extra dynamic to the driving force of the day’s live music. Among the finest that I failed to see were Louis Romegoux, Carl Woodford, Double No No (and a sweet pair of postman’s shorts) and David J Roch. In the late afternoon sun, the rousing horns of the Renegade Brass Band drew in loungers and wanderers in anticipation of emphatic instrumental revelry and got them bouncing into the early evening. RBB began sprouting tentacles and soon morphed into an uber-assemblage of horns, strings, drums and vocals before retreating to leave festival anchors the 7 Black Tentacles to consume the expectant multitude. After satiating the crowd with a crafty and unfalteringly enthusiastic set packed with intent and dressed with gin-spirited banter, 7BT indulged the peaking melee with a medley of everyone’s favourite hip-hop classics.

Lazy Tree Surgeons on the main stage and a steady, energetic, if restless close. What now? Silently absorbing the haunting harp and vocals of the Third Half at the Redhouse after party was an unexpected but perfect transition from day to night. And so to Peace in the Dark, Peace in the Park’s less well behaved but mandatory sibling. Four sound systems, a bonfire, plenty of dancing who knows where and a brilliant end to a day that reflects and significantly contributes to Sheffield’s diverse and importantly open, receptive music community.

LAND FESTIVAL.

29TH - 31ST MAY.

REVIEWER – CHARLOTTE ROBINSON.

When one of my friends invited me to Land for her birthday, I was immediately intrigued. It advertised itself as a festival bringing acts from Northern parts of the UK such as Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham and Chesterfield together. The festival was a forty-five minute drive from Sheffield, in the outskirts of Doncaster. The flier promised live art, a hog roast and an attempt to beat a world record for tiddlywinks. That aside, for the whole weekend including camping the tickets cost twenty seven English pounds, which I think most will agree is a more than reasonable price for a festival.

On arrival to the festival site, we pitched our tents and (since it was raining) began to make tea inside the tent. Perhaps not the safest behaviour. A security guard poked his head into our tent and told us we had to empty out the fuel. He then started to ring the police on his mobile phone because some kids were caught smoking weed near us. We made a joke about not knowing tea was illegal. Didn’t go down too well. We were a bit gutted, because on the fliers and website there wasn’t anything about not bringing your own stoves to cook on and, being cheap student types, we’d brought mainly tins and cunningly froze some milk to make tea.

That evening my fellow camp mates were ‘having a quiet one’ in preparation for the following night but I went exploring. Between the main dance tents and the live terrace there was more than enough to keep me amused. After a very rambunctious evening of running around, the next morning I had a well-deserved breakfast for a very reasonable two quid. The next evening was similar to the previous night; I particularly enjoyed an act on the live terrace called Floating Death Picnic (look it up). The chill-out tent very quickly became a raving tent, which was also enjoyable. We all tried some of the hog roast. It was excellent.

I found the major pitfall of Land was the behaviour of the security team. In my experience, police and security are present more for the safety of the festival-goers than actual law enforcement, but the security at Land were searching tents and people at random, prompting feelings of fear rather than actual security. The toilets were also a nightmare. I know festival toilets are always a bit gross, but they were blocked on the first night and got progressively worse. Also, the world championship for tiddlywinks and numerous goods stalls that were promised never materialised.

If they ever do it again I will be in attendance, and I would recommend it to those of you who enjoy a bit of non-commercial fun. It was a nice little festival, with a good atmosphere, and I felt it was definitely worth the twenty-seven quid I paid. I have doubts about whether it will happen again, however, because apparently there were numerous complaints from the locals, and parts of it seemed very disorganised. But I definitely had fun, and everyone I went with had a good time.





SOUND.

KILL THE CAPTAINS. MACC AND DGOHN.

TOBACCO. JAMES BLAKE.

**KILL THE CAPTAINS.
FUN ANXIETY.**



ARMELLODIE RECORDS.
REVIEWER – JAMES LOCK.

Recorded at Red Cloud Studios, **Fun Anxiety** by Kill the Captains is an ace album. I have rarely heard a name better fitted to a release. The title seems to depict two deeply embedded musical themes. Fun. Yes, Kill the Captains are a fun band - the tempo is upbeat and aspects of some of the guitar lines almost take you back to '98 summer punk days. 'Almost' being the operative word here. The songs often change their melodic routes and the structures seem best described by the words 'rampant' and 'innovative'. Alongside these elements is - as the title suggests - a depth of anxiety. A deep-seated unrest permeates every melody and lyric throughout the album. To the listener this modern disenchantment is epitomised in the noise segments of songs, in the quick changes of melody and in the impassioned tones of lead vocalist Leon Carter.

When listening to this first time round, one is drawn to making comparisons with Sonic Youth, even Youth Movie Soundtracks, but these random genre associations simply do not cover it. Kill the Captains are a brave band, settling among the three-chord change modern indie crew like a rose with thorns intact. Personally, I've been dying to hear something that incorporates the variety of influences apparent in this album. Standout tracks for me are 'Yellow Brush', with its drone rock start reminiscent of Pelican, and 'Rummy', with its amusing lyrics about pleasantries, incredibly catchy guitar lines and percussive claps. But the winner - if one song can win on an album - has to be 'Cellar Dweller', which seems to capture so much of this album's dark punk and post rock sensibilities. Superb.

While the album is by no means flawless, with tracks like 'Spot the Leopard' and 'Rope' not quite managing to convey the comprehensive matching of vocal and melody, this album is still a major achievement and stands out high above the rest of recent Sheffield releases. In short, bloody good and well worth a fiver.

**MACC AND DGOHN.
SOME SHIT SAAINK.**



REPHLEX RECORDS.
REVIEWER - BEN DOREY.

Fresh Rephlex signings Macc and Dgohn have a strange name and a refreshingly thoughtful and innovative take on drum 'n' bass. Their first LP **Some Shit Saaink** is released this month and showcases the talent of this South London duo admirably. Featuring a body of tracks that seem defined by a specific aesthetic, the pair meld the rolling breakbeats and deep atmosphere's of late 90s jungle with the crisp immediacy and technical slickness of modern audio production.

First track '7C 1020' sets the tone for all this nicely, with brooding pad sounds reminiscent of Rufige Kru's deep stylings blending with dub techno echoes before intricate, brushy breaks emerge rather than smash you in the face. Nice stuff basically, and when the tune does finally drop it is out of silence rather than an increasingly regular kick drum battering ram. A combination of the old and new is also apparent in the basslines, with 808 pitched kicks providing punch while evolving drones nodding towards Shackleton and Bass Clef swell into the spaces between.

'Long Tall Sally' presents a different mood. A mournful and minimal echo of jazz oozes from the sparsely used Rhodes chords which tail away into a drumcentric jungle tune of cascading choice breakbeats, interspersed with deep bass stabs, distorted vocal samples and ambient atmospherics. The distinctive moodiness of this and other songs adds a cinematic flavour to the music, evoking a wider range of emotional responses than you might expect to experience listening to what is essentially a record for the dancefloor.

At some points the balance between the vintage and the modern becomes upset, most notably in the introductions to tracks like 'Empathy Box' and 'Geve', in which the traditional electronic atmospherics Rephlex regulars will know well provide intricate and meditative calm before the inevitable storm of rapid drum breaks.

On the other end of the scale, there are moments where you'd be hard pressed to tell whether the tracks were made this millennium, due to the pair's fetish for the early Metalheadz sound. For me this is no bad thing, but it does form the basis of the only complaint I can find with this record - while each track does present individual facets, the aesthetic that makes the record so cohesive as a body of work could also make it tiresome, with most tracks descending into diminutive rolling breakbeats and brooding bass textures once they've dropped. Whether this uniformity is a good or a bad thing will come down to the mood you're in when you listen, but listen you should...

**TOBACCO.
MANIAC MEAT.**



ANTICON RECORDS.
REVIEWER - JACK SCOURFIELD.

It's fairly rare that I get properly annoyed by an album. One previous occasion that springs to mind was in the mid-90s, when I got annoyed that my cassette player had chewed up my copy of The Cartoons' magnum opus 'Toonage', meaning that I no longer had the immortal lyrics of "ooh-ee ooh-aah-aah, ting-tang walla-walla bing-bang" at my beck and call. I would not like to have been a Lego man in my play set on that day; they must've taken a pounding from my big plastic dinosaur and assorted Biker Mice From Mars as I vented my fury.

I'd been planning on reserving my next bout of album annoyance for when the inevitable disappointment that will be Klaxons' second LP hits the shelves, but as it turns out the new rave trio have been pipped at the post by Tom Fec - aka Tobacco - and his latest record, **Maniac Meat**. This album annoys me for a variety of reasons. For a start, it's not as good as his previous stuff, especially what he's released with his other project, Black Moth Super Rainbow. Secondly, it features two fairly pointless cameos from Beck, including one song - 'Fresh Hex' - that contains what the press release describes as "free-association, alliterative rap". I mean, get a fucking grip Beck. Free-association alliterative rap? When has a song ever been made better by Beck laying down some free-association alliterative rap on it? Never, that's when. "Canvassing confined the cassette deck, Color coordinate your cowboy catchphrase". Shut up, you tart.

Above all, though, this album is just quite grating to listen to. Trying to sit through 16 songs of awkward clattering and grinding proved to be physically impossible when I attempted it on the train the other day, and I had to stop half way and listen to something else to prevent me from ripping off my ears in a mad frenzy and throwing them at the boy near me who was the brazen owner of both a BlackBerry AND an iPhone. There are a few solid tracks on the record - 'Constellation Dirtbike Head', 'Mexican Icecream' and 'Heavy Makeup' are all fairly decent concoctions - but for the most part the album seems like the result of experimental over-indulgence. Songs tend to be close to the two-minute mark, meaning that more often than not we're treated to an ugly blast of drums, bass, guitars and free-association alliterative rap, before the track abruptly finishes and the next under-developed assault ensues. The songs just aren't good enough to qualify the dark and aggressive mood of the record and I found little enjoyment listening to Maniac Meat. If only I still had that Cartoons tape to cheer me up...

JAMES BLAKE.

REVIEWER - JACK OPUS.

Two previously unheard James Blake tracks appeared and then disappeared almost as quickly on YouTube recently. Going on words in a recent interview from the man himself, they seem to be an insight into what we can expect in terms of musical output from the 21 year old Londoner in the future.

First track 'Measurements' has an almost gospel feel to the arrangement and movement of the vocal harmonies. The recording is quite rough round the edges but the quality of the musicianship shines through and it's not hard to see how Giles Peterson has already invited Mr Blake onto his worldwide show on Radio 1. However, for me this track serves as a warm up to the second track...

'Limit to Your Love', like most of James Blake's finest works, had me sold within the first five seconds, dropping a catchy vocal and piano companionship that falls into a dubwise, stripped out piece which eventually blurs the soulful beginning and soundsystem-ready bassline.

The best thing about James Blake's music is that it seems to effortlessly smudge the gaps between the genres others want to put it in. Combining classic songwriting techniques with up-to-date production techniques and brilliantly creative ideas on 'CMYK' and 'Air and Lack Thereof', he has also made some inventive reworkings of American hits under his alias Harmonimix. Then with these most recent demos a new talent has emerged...His voice.

Most of the vocals or vocal samples used in his music have been his own voice and with these two tracks you get a much better idea of just how vocally capable he is. It seems as if James Blake is carving a space for himself in British music to allow for a long career and I am personally very pleased about it.

myspace.com/jamesblakeproduction





The music of Ben Lukas Boysen is not easily defined. One online biography labels it “an audiobook without a narrator”. Another plugs for “twisted rhythms swirling around your brain like an inhaled sip of wine and a gulped breath of smoke”. For the less poetic among us, it takes cues from techno, ambient, industrial, breakcore, drum and bass and electronica, but is none of the above. For the more poetic among us, it’s like a taking a midnight walk through a petrified forest of weeping willows (literally weeping) with only a sinister robotic owl and a steel grey sky for company. With no shoes.

But while his music is dense, brooding and darkly celestial, Hecq himself is remarkably “normal”. Currently residing in his native Germany, Mr Boysen has been producing under the Hecq moniker since 2003, his latest offering the lusciously tribal *Steeltongued* on Hymen Records. And with two albums and a 12” in the pipeline, he shows no sign of letting up on his mission to make people all over the world scratch their heads in WTF wonderment.

For the readers who have never heard your music, how would you describe Hecq?

A borderline crossbreed of noise versus silence maybe...I’m not sure to be honest, but these two aspects are the core elements of what I’m trying to do.

How did you first get into music production? Did you learn instruments formally before moving to a computer?

Yes I did - I played piano for a few years and tried to learn guitar before that. The piano is still the most influential instrument for me and I will get back to it at some point, but obviously I have been focusing on the electronic aspects of music for the last few years.

What is your approach to making music and who/what are your biggest influences?

What matters to me is to find the core or essence of a track. It’s easy to overload a track with lots of edits and glitches or to hide behind a huge setup, but if that won’t add to the music itself there’s no use in doing so. I needed a few albums to figure this out for myself to be honest.

I’m always asking myself if whatever it is I’m planning will serve the track and if it’s there for a reason. With this question in mind, it’s a lot harder to write a good tune and the influence and inspiration of other media and/or artists gets more and more important. I’m really into composers like Thomas Köner, Nils Frahm, Mono, Loren Dent and The Dead Sea, but also Current Value, DJ Scud, Loops Haunt and Noisia. I wouldn’t say that I have a certain field or style of music where I get my inspirations from.

There is a real ‘WTF’ factor in your music. I mean that as a compliment. Do you ever make a track or loop and disregard it because it’s too ‘straight up’? I suppose what I’m asking is, do you ever find yourself falling into templates or routines of production that you have to break to keep the music fresh and individual?

About 70% of my drafts are going nowhere for this very reason. I really don’t find it easy to write music, especially when I look at the large, high-quality output of some colleagues. My tracks are all extremely static at first, very straight up beats that get chopped up over and over. The interesting part is hidden in between the bars - the elements and breakdowns that create a strong dynamic contrast but don’t compromise a track’s drive and pace.

In the end it depends on the project and tune. Sometimes keeping a track ‘structurally intact’ and simple is the only thing to do, sometimes it’s good to mess up every second of a track. Maybe the actual WTF factor in this music is that nothing matters - you can do something different every time if you want, which might be the best way to keep things fresh. If you want to do a concept album for triangle and washing machine right after a breakcore 12”, go ahead! I don’t believe in stylistic consistency but in creative consistency.

What do you think the difference between a producer and an audiodesigner is? How have you found working with large companies on your design work? Do you find it easy to compromise on ideas when you are working for a client?

You don’t have to compromise ideas that often because the client usually has an idea of what he wants already. There’s a huge gap between those ideas and the actual result though. An audiodesigner should be able to compensate or translate ideas into something both parties understand. In the end you don’t approach commercial projects in the same way you write an album or EP, simply because it’s not as intimate. Not with a smaller amount of respect towards the project though, just with a bigger amount of pragmatism.

Are you ever concerned that people project the sparseness/darkness of your music onto you as a person?

Not really. In some ways it makes sense. Obviously the music is a more or less direct output of an artist and of course there is a major part of his perception of beauty and aesthetics as well as his personality involved there, so it’s not wrong to link back. In my experience though, the artist that you define through his work is a really different person if you have a few drinks with him.

Your track with Nongenetic on the new album introduced lyrics/rapping to your music. Is this something you might focus on more in the future?

Yeah. I’m talking with a few artists about contributions for the upcoming album(s) at the moment. So far it’s only brainstorming but I love the aspects they would add to a piece, since it would be very different things they do. We’ll have to see how this turns out.

Is there anyone you would like to collaborate with who hasn’t crossed your path yet?

Oh yes. The list is far too long, but to name a few: Phoencia, Mono, Dopplereffekt, Deaf Center, Murcof...and so on. High goals, but in exchange I don’t dream about owning a Porsche.

Do you have any advice for producers trying to achieve a sound that is approaching unique?

Although I wouldn’t want this to sound dogmatic (speaking from personal experience only) - don’t listen to others! As helpful as friends and fellow musicians can be, their advice is only useful if you have determined what you’re aiming for. Once you have done this and you feel safe and oriented about the things you want to achieve, discussions and recommendations become much more helpful, supportive and valuable. For the same reason I won’t start to explain which gear you should use, because that is as individual as the producer. Whatever helps a musician complete ideas is the right setup.

All of this might sound very basic, but I speak with many friends these days about their music and notice how dazzling the flood of possibilities is. I would highly recommend you seek advice on online forums if you want to, but don’t let the options define what you want to do.

What projects are you currently working on and when are they likely to see the light of day?

I’m currently working on another 12” and two albums - one as Hecq, which will focus on pretty hard material, and one as Ben Lukas Boysen, which will be...quite different. Most of all this should be released by very late 2010 or early 2011. I’ve also been working on a couple of remixes for Roel Funcken, Depotax, Niveau Zero and Raoul Sinier that will be released in the coming months.

hecq.de



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HEARTBREAK PRODUCTIONS.
24TH JUNE @ BOTANICAL GARDENS.**

REVIEWER - JOE KRISS.

It's quite rare to see outside theatre in Sheffield, and along with a bring your own booze policy Heartbreak's series of productions in the Botanical Gardens are always very attractive. Oscar Wilde's play of political deceit, back handing and corruption was definitely a topical production to stage in the recent political climate. It explores the inverse relationship between money and ideals, and how those at the throne of corporate and governmental power don't always exercise their position with pure intentions. But Wilde's play is more a farce than a capitalist or political satire, and Heartbreak's production in the comely surroundings of Botanical gardens definitely stressed the comedy in the piece.

It was performed by five actors, who settled the audience into a somewhat unusual space for theatre with a series of bawdy music hall numbers. Staged out of a small gazebo, the set looked a bit bare at times, but the actors made up for it by strong characterisation and a good use of costume. Being sat among picknicking couples creates an informal atmosphere, which while being decidedly civilised sets the tone for a pleasant evening.

There were notable performances from the delightfully foppish Lord Goring (Andrew John Tait) and the manipulative aristocratic socialite Mrs Cheveley (Helen Rynne). Wilde is known for his comedy of manners plays, in which he paints an image of amusing upper class frivolity through a series of scandals and banterous discourse. Yet under the guise of a lightly amusing play, An Ideal Husband does hold a few deeper moments worth noting. The morals of the ruling classes seem to be based more on public appearances than real responsibility. He explores the motives that drive people into political life and, in a mask of foppishness, illuminates their excesses.

Heartbreak's production was fast paced and deftly utilised the comedy in the play without resorting to stereotypes. Despite its farcical nature, there were a few moments of engagement. In particular, Sir Robert Chiltern (Oliver Hulme) gave a convincing portrayal of a man worried of losing his public life and his aspirations of running for office.

Heartbreak is currently touring across the UK, but will be back in Sheffield soon with productions of Love in Shakespeare and The Secret Garden. Think rug, bottle of good wine, ice packs, food, deckchair - pretty much the perfect way to spend a warm summer evening in the park.

heartbreakproductions.co.uk



FILMREEL.

HARVEY/WHEN YOU'RE STRANGE.

**HARVEY (1950).
DIRECTOR - HENRY KOSTER.**

REVIEWER – SARA HILL.

Meet Harvey. He is 6 foot 3 and a half inches tall and he is a rabbit. Well, a pooka to be precise, which is a Celtic fairy in animal form. Harvey is the best friend of one Elwood P. Dowd and the pair are to be found happily propping up Charlie's Bar every afternoon, until Elwood's invisible furry friend threatens the social standing of his sister Veta and her daughter Myrtle Mae's chance of marrying well. Then it's off to Chumley's Rest Sanitarium and a comedy of errors.

James Stewart's performance as Dowd is stunningly understated. He floats like a ball of serene sunshine through the increasing neuroses of the surrounding characters. Every fluid mannerism and languid tone of voice is the perfect counterpoint to the equally well performed and increasingly hysterical character of Veta, played by Josephine Hull, who scooped the Oscar.

Adapted from the play by Mary Chase, who also wrote the screenplay, Harvey is at once a delightful fantasy, a critical portrait of attitudes to mental health and an insight into the social norms of another era. That it manages all this without losing its grace and humour or ever lowering itself to anger and snideness is testament to its genius. Psychiatry, snobbery and hypocrisy are all targets in the film's sights, but not for destruction as overt attacks would ruin the fragile atmosphere created. Instead, a gentle teasing is all that's required.

By the end, Harvey's magic has been felt by each character, caused love to blossom and brought a family together. While not wishing to romanticise a time well known for its racism, sexism and homophobia, the film is such a perfect and timeless gem and I believe anyone, however fond of spectacular special effects, will wind up spellbound as well.

**WHEN YOU'RE STRANGE:
A FILM ABOUT THE DOORS (2009).
DIRECTOR - TOM DICILLO.**

REVIEWER - OWEN COGAN.

DiCillo's documentary is neither original nor hugely engaging, but if like me you're a fan of the Doors, you'll enjoy being submerged in Morrison's rhythmically surreal world.

The first thing to note is that Johnny Depp's narration is uninspiring and affected. His attempts at profundity come off like a stoned adolescent trying to seduce a girl by sounding deep. You're not deep, Depp. Anyway, don't you have another shit film about pirates to be making? That said, his recitation of Morrison's poetry is welcome and well delivered.

When You're Strange outlines the history of the Doors, from their inception on a Californian beach to Morrison's demise in a Parisian bath tub. Some of the film's footage is stock stuff we've seen over and over again in documentaries about the 60s: fat spliffs, black activists and bare breasts shot on grainy sepia film. But interwoven with this scene-setting stuff are large quantities of genuinely exciting footage. We're treated to spectacular stage performances (including Morrison's on stage arrest in Connecticut) back stage conversations, clips of the band recording in the studio and reels and reels of Jim getting wasted. Watching the film is an enjoyable experience because you genuinely get a taste of what it was like to exist in the band's hedonistic world.

Morrison's life comes across as an experiment gone wrong. We see a man using drugs and music to explore a reality greatly distanced from that of mainstream America and a great deal more vital. Jim's lyrics and his life come across as a poetic reinterpretation of our stagnant contemporary perspective on life. Of course, his lyrics (like his world view) are overblown, romanticised and egotistical. Of course, he is perpetually on the verge of becoming an affected, self-aware caricature, but he is at the same time doing something vibrant, new, insightful and moving. Morrison's interpretation of existence is a surreal antidote to the lethargy of modern culture. His music, poetry and lyrics brought some mysticism into popular culture and although he was no William Blake and this documentary is no piece of art, it is worth seeing for a glimpse of both the joyful vibrancy and psychosis of Morrison's mind.

When You're Strange is playing at the Showroom from 2nd July.





THORNBRIDGE BREWERY. BUXTON ROAD. BAKEWELL. THORNBRIDGEBREWERY.CO.UK

Visiting Thornbridge Brewery is a decision I can wholeheartedly recommend making. Get on the A621 and drive/bus it to Bakewell, where you'll see signs for the A6 and Riverside Business Park. The brewery itself is in a typically scenic location by the river and reminiscent of how I've imagined Willy Wonka's factory to be ever since I've been old enough to drink in pubs. Glistening steel pipes, huge cauldrons and generally the look of high-end technology running at its peak - all for the purpose of great beer making. This is 21st Century ale brewing at its most impressive.

Thornbridge Brewery is currently celebrating, and rightly so, since there Jaipur beer is now five years in production and has won over 60 awards for innovation and quality. First brewed on June 7th 2005 at the old Thornbridge hall site, the beer was originally called 'Mystery Blonde' before it became the pale ale we all know and love. To mark this auspicious occasion, Thornbridge have commissioned an old friend of ours - Martin F Bedford (Now Then 26 featured artist) - to design a limited edition poster for the beer. We have one hanging on our wall. It is undoubtedly ace. Simon Webster, Thornbridge Chief Operating Officer, comments: "There is no doubt that Jaipur has reached iconic status and it deserves to have its own poster by an artist like Martin who has produced so many iconic ones in the past."

While Jaipur is receiving all the limelight at the moment, it's worth being aware of its now jealous brother and sisters - Wild Swan, Lord Marples, Hopton, Halcyon (knock you on your back stuff!), Kipling, Ashford and Saint Petersburg. Keep an eye out when you're next in the Sheffield Tap. We recommend one of each.



THE OLD SWEET SHOP. 1B NETHER EDGE ROAD / 0114 255 8515 THEOLDSWEETSHOPSHEFFIELD.CO.UK

The Old Sweet Shop in Netheredge is one of our favourite places in all the land of Sheffield.

It's cosy, it has character, it supports local artists, appears at local festivals and distributes hard-hitting but entertaining independent mags like this one. The Old Sweet Shop is run by Emma Hudson, who like her shop is also ace and will go out of her way to support you if you're any good. We think there is a connection here.

Every three months or so, the Old Sweet Shop exhibits a different artist's work, ranging from painting to sculpture to graffiti to crafts. This month's showcase is called 'Kitten Face Presents' by Sam Bunn, whose work we think will make you smile. Go and check it out.

RED HOUSE FOOD. 168 SOLLY STREET. (12-3 & 5-9PM WED-THURS, 12-9PM FRI-SUN)

Better known for its involvement in all things music than the quality of its food, the Red House has been a Sheffield gem for quite some time now. That gem just got a little more valuable with the addition of great food from chef Thomas Kerrigan. Serving main meals for under £7 is a great way to get trade through the door, but being able to match that price with superb quality is a real achievement. We recommend the Slow Roasted Shoulder of Pork Pie. Apparently, the chef's favourite is the Roast Chicken Breast with Pesto Gnocchi and pinenut butter, which does sound more upmarket. Best to make up your own mind folks - get down to the Red House for some great food and service as soon as possible.

FROOLY. 0114 307 2342. FROOLY.COM

Frooly is new to Sheffield and we should all be thankful it has arrived. It is the first of its kind here - an online community marketplace for independent businesses only. Naturally that ticks a pretty big box for us at Now Then.

In essence, Frooly offers each business - be it painter, musician, butcher, grocer or any other - a free webpage allowing them to communicate with other local users and advertise products online. It also enables them to invite existing clients and friends to become frooly members and to communicate special promotions via email, text message and frooly mail.

We recommend signing up for a free Frooly site as soon as possible, because a network is only as good as the people on it and there are some amazing businesses in Sheffield.

FAVOURITES.

OUR PICK OF THE BUNCH.

THE BLOODY CHAMBER AND OTHER STORIES. BY ANGELA CARTER.

Carter's stated aim on writing this book was not to do 'versions' of fairytales, but to "extract the latent content...and use it as the beginning of new stories". Whether you believe she was successful or not, what is certain is that the result is a unique and powerful collection of tales in the oddly-named magical realism genre.

From the darkly erotic title story based on Bluebeard's Castle with its feminist twist (Prince Charming's rescuing services will not be needed) to the joyous sensuality in the stripping of artifice and revelation of true identity at the end of 'The Tiger's Bride', this collection will delight and tantalise. The stories reflect various portraits of desire, sexuality, femininity and violence like glittering gemstones and caused waves of controversy upon their publication. Their strength remains undiminished today, even in our jaded times.

THE VINE INN. 160-162 CEMETERY ROAD. 0114 2768920.

A long-standing favourite, the Vine has been notable for its absence amongst our pages of independent boozeries of late, but with renewed vigour it rises to retake the summer. The Vine is a pub without a sniff of 'are you local..?' and a bar without a swagger or overblown ego, where through the day a pint and pool tops the bill. In the evenings it hosts a variety of acts and some of our city's finest promoters. There's something going on every night of the week, from live acts and open mics to DJs and barbecues. The beer garden here bills itself as the 'best in Sheffield', quite a claim, but one I'd happily attest to along with many others who've whiled away a sunny evening there, sippin' a cider and munchin' a burger.

PLANET TERROR RECORDS. PLANETTERRORRECORDS.COM

Planet Terror Records is your local friendly netlabel. It provides free monthly music downloads with a focus on electronica, hip hop, dub, dubstep and ambient. 23 releases have gone online since this project began in October 2008 and the 24th is taking shape in the form of a compilation featuring tracks by mainstays like Culprate, Titus Twelve, Adam Kroll, Sephirot and Kingstux, as well as a few wildcards to keep you on your toes. Look out for PLANET024.

You can follow Planet Terror goings on via Facebook, Twitter or their own website. If you like dark and somewhat sinister electronic patterns this one's for you.





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